

# CAHS

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**Testimony Before the Public Health Committee  
Re: House Bill 6693 – An Act Concerning Creation of a State Health Care Plan  
Submitted by Maggie Adair, Public Policy Director  
Connecticut Association for Human Services  
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Good afternoon Senator Handley, Representative Sayers, and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Maggie Adair; I am Public Policy Director at the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS). CAHS is a statewide nonprofit organization that works to reduce poverty, strengthen families, and reconnect communities through advocacy supported by outreach, research, and public education.

**I am here to testify in support of the purpose of House Bill No. 6693, An Act Concerning Creation of a State Health Care Plan.** Health care should be a public right for every Connecticut resident. Given Connecticut's wealth, capacity, and relatively small size, this state should and can provide access to affordable, quality health care to all people. Instead of lagging behind, Connecticut should be at the forefront in thinking through and implementing a health care model for the nation to follow.

While not fully drafted, the language in H.B. 6693 proposes a health care plan that would cover everyone and be funded by employer and individual contributions. We support the concept of a universal health care plan that follows the five principals of the Institute of Medicine:

1. includes everyone;
2. is continuous and portable from job to job, employment to unemployment;
3. is affordable to individuals, especially those with limited income;
4. is affordable and sustainable to society; and
5. enhances health and well-being.

Several health care proposals have been put forth this legislative session. Clearly, Connecticut's leaders recognize that the current system is broken. While each of the proposals employ different strategies, they open up a path for constructive dialogue from stakeholders: the governor, legislature, medical community, business community, insurance industry, and residents. In the end, however, health care in Connecticut must provide universal coverage and *real* access to services.

Health care for low-income individuals *must not* be compromised as part of any plan; we cannot emphasize enough the need to improve access to quality health care for low-income families. It is

critical that health care reform address the Medicaid/HUSKY program. Specifically, we urge policymakers to:

- increase Medicaid/HUSKY provider rates to medical and dental providers;
- raise rates to SAGA providers;
- align HUSKY A parents with their children at 185% of the federal poverty level;
- provide coverage for pregnant women with incomes up to 300% of the federal poverty level;
- cover elderly and disabled individuals with incomes up to 185% of the federal poverty level;
- and implement continuous eligibility under the HUSKY program for children.

We also support the Governor's HUSKY outreach initiatives and urge policymakers to incorporate adequate and strategic outreach elements in an overall health care reform plan.

The Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut has laid out three models for policymakers to consider as they work together to ensure that all Connecticut citizens have access to quality and affordable health care. One of the three models includes elements of a single-payer system: 100% of people are covered through a state health care pool that is paid for by employers and individuals. The pool allows for the state to cut costs and increase efficiency through negotiating rates, bulk purchasing, and setting standards for quality of care.

For many small businesses and self-employed individuals, this type of model could provide their first opportunity to acquire health care coverage. Some form of a single-payer system could provide a vehicle to reduce overall costs, streamline and cut administrative costs, stabilize provider rates, and build purchasing power.

Creating a holistic and sustainable health care system poses daunting challenges and will require creative minds and political will. We need to rely on intelligent, inquisitive, responsible, and accountable individuals to figure this out. We owe it to our citizens, our economy, and our state. Let's be the first in the nation to provide real health care for all.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.